

## Organic farming program - Fiji Times Online



FRIEND Fiji founder Sashi Kiran (left) with USAID regional coordinator Riachrd Edwards, Roko Tui Ra Mosese Nakoroi and Agriculture's Jone Sovalawa at the launch in Burewai Ra. Picture: BALJEET SINGH

ORGANIC farmers along the coastline of Nakorotubu, Ra, could be exporting high value disaster resilient crops in the near future.

The farmers from eight villages have been engaged in an organic farming program implemented by the Foundation of Rural Integrated Enterprises and Development (FRIEND) Fiji and funded by USAID Pacific Climate Change Fund (PACAM).

FRIEND Fiji founder Sashi Kiran said there was a great demand for organic products in the local and international markets.

"Fresh produce has a steady market to begin with, however, we can process that which goes into our packages and our tea bags," she said.

"So we know that once the base volume of production is established then we will be able to start selling more of our products to these markets."

The organisation produces and packages different varieties of tea leaves, spices and jams which are sold to local and international clients.

Ms Kiran said soil testing and organic farming workshops had been carried out at the villages over the past two months.

"We want to ensure that all of these farms are organic. So there will be no use of chemicals at all.

"We come back to the villages with our results and basically teach them some of the best farming practices while at the same time encouraging them to revert to the traditional form of farming.

"There is a traditional system that already exists and we are working within those systems to be able to incorporate our own ideas and advice and also empower the villagers to take over the whole operation of their farm."

Ra Provincial Council Roko Tui Mosese Rakoroi said the people of Nakorotubu would benefit greatly from the program.

He said about 76,000 acres of land in the Ra Province was found in the Nakorotubu district that needed to be used for the benefit of its people.

